MANCHESTER

AND

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A side-light on an earlier
Fight for Freedom

By

F. Hourani, B.A.

Price Sixpence

THE STATUE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In Platt Fields Park

Manchester

INTRODUCTION

In the course of preparing a series of talks for broadcasting in Arabic on the history and development of the United States of America, I came across the report of an incident which took place during the American Civil War of 1861/5. I was so struck with its aptness to present-day events that I decided to include a summary of it in the Arabic broadcast and to issue it in the present form for the benefit of my fellow-citizens in Manchester and surrounding districts. I am hopeful that it may appeal also to a wider British and American public who share many characteristics and a common heritage.

A word of explanation may serve to illustrate the significance of the incident in question. The city of Manchester had become the centre of the cotton industry and the Southern States of America were then the chief source of supply for the spindles and looms of Lancashire. Soon after the outbreak of the Civil War the supply of cotton was cut off and thousands of operatives were thrown out of employment. This continued all through the four years of conflict and the distress of the working classes became more acute as time went on.

It was in the midst of this unprecedented crisis in the history of the cotton trade, when men with their families faced misery and starvation, and also in the face of sympathy in high places in the Government of the time towards the Southern States, that the working men of Manchester rose in their thousands to uphold what they considered to be the right. Little wonder then that President Lincoln called their action "an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country."

No words of mine can add to the lustre shed by the sentiments expressed in the text on the great President who fills the centre of the picture. As for the land of my adoption whose hospitality I have enjoyed these fifty-one years, I can find no better words to express my love and admiration for her at this juncture than those used in the course of a speech delivered in the Manchester Free Trade Hall on the 18th November, 1847, by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

> "I see her not dispirited, not weak, but well remembering that she has seen dark days before—indeed with a kind of instinct that she sees a little better in a cloudy day, and that in storm and battle and calamity she has a secret vigour and a pulse like cannon. I see her in her old age, not decrepit, but young, and still daring to believe in her power of endurance and expansion. Seeing this I say, 'All hail, Mother of Nations, Mother of Heroes, with strength still equal to the time.'"

F. HOURANI.

Reform Club, Manchester,

ADDRESS FROM WORKING MEN TO PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

(Reprinted from the Manchester Guardian, January 1st, 1863.)

Last evening a public meeting was held in the Free Trade Hall, which was crowded, in order to pass resolutions in favour of the cause of the United States, and to adopt an address to President Lincoln. The meeting had been called by an advertisement signed by J. C. Edwards and E. Hooson, two working men. Amongst those on the platform were:—Mr. T. Bazley, M.P., Professor Greenbank, Messrs J. R. Cooper, R. Cooper, James Edwards, Thomas Evans, S. Pope, W. J. Williams, Charles Thompson, J. R. Raper, J. C. Edwards, E. Hooson, Dr. J. Watts, and Jackson, President Davis's escaped coachman.

J. C. Edwards said that the promoters of the meeting were not prepared with a chairman but he saw that the Mayor of Manchester was in the room, and considering His Worship's connection with the working classes in the past, and their esteem for him, he thought the Mayor was entitled to the position of chairman of the meeting. He made a motion to that effect.

E. Hooson said he was not aware whether the Mayor would feel backward in taking the chair, but it was a matter in which the Mayor himself must be the judge. If the vote was adopted unanimously, he had no doubt that the Mayor would acquiesce. The vote was adopted with acclamation and the Mayor (Abel Heywood, Esq.) took the chair.

The Mayor said: "Before I take the chair, I wish you to understand that I do not take it as the Mayor of Manchester, but simply as Abel Heywood (hear, hear). I will not compromise any member of the Council by the course which I will take to-night. I feel an interest in the proceedings of working men. I have felt an interest in their behalf during the whole of my life (hear, hear) and whether I hold the position of Chief Magistrate, or any other position, you may depend upon it that such feelings will animate me as long as I live (hear, hear). Upon the resolutions which are to be submitted to you to-night I have nothing to say, because I have not seen them. I come here for the purpose of preserving order and decorum at the meeting. I have come here because I believe that the interests of the working men—that the interest, in fact, of this great country are intimately bound up with the question which is to be laid before you to-night (hear, hear). Believing that the interests of this country are in a great measure at stake, and involved in the questions to be submitted to-night, I should be wanting in my duty, and not acting the part of a patriot if I shrank from the

performance of that which I believe to be right (hear, hear). I therefore, accept the chair which you have been kind enough to put me in, and shall now call on the speakers to propose the various resolutions (applause).

J. C. Edwards, the secretary, read the following extract from a letter from Mr. J. Stuart Mill:—

> Bleakheath Park, December 24th, 1862.
>
> Dear Sir,—I thank you very sincerely for your two letters, and for the very important and most gratifying information which they contain. Hardly anything could do more good at present than such a demonstration from the suffering operatives of Lancashire, while there is the fact in itself, and in the state of mind which prompts it, a moral greatness which is at once a just rebuke to the mean feeling of so great a portion of the public, and a source of unqualified happiness to those whose hopes and fears for the great interests of humanity are, as mine are, inseparably bound up in the moral and intellectual prospects of the working classes.

A letter was also read from Mr. Hugh Mason, in which that gentleman said:—

> "I have no doubt whatever that the rebellion was planned, and has to this moment been prompted, for the sole object of perpetrating slavery, and my prayer is that it will fail of its diabolical purpose. I hope your meeting will be the first of many similar ones throughout our free country."

J. C. Edwards moved the following resolution:—

> "That this meeting, recognising the common brotherhood of mankind, and the sacred and inalienable right of every human being to personal freedom and equal protection, records its detestation of negro slavery in America, and of the attempt of the rebellious Southern slaveholders to organise on the great American continent a nation having slavery as its basis."

He said that an effort had been made in a leading article of the *Manchester Guardian* to deter the working men from assembling together for such a purpose as that for which they were met. The editor of that paper differed very materially from Mr. Stuart Mill, one of the greatest of English thinkers. They were, however, at last met to give expression to their sympathy for those who were the champions of free labour on the great American continent (applause). In discussing the question they should join issue with many of their Manchester friends. It might suit certain classes in this country to laud the conduct of the Southern slaveholders in their secession movement, and to disguise the fact that the South rebelled to conserve, perpetuate, and extend slavery, and that in fact slavery was the sole cause of the present Civil War (cheers, and cries of "No, no," and "Tariff"). President Lincoln determined to circumscribe the limits of slavery, and the Southern men saw that the day of unholy compromise had ceased and hence the rebellion (applause). Attempts had been made to excite the people of this country to a recognition of the South. Tow rapscallions were employed by Mason and Sidell and paid by Confederate money.

They called upon a manufacturer, now on the platform, thinking that he had Southern proclivities. They made men drunk, and held what were called representative meetings of the cotton workers of Lancashire. Yet, as Mr. Bright said the other day, with all the money and malice they could use to excite the people to recognise the South, they had not been able to succeed; but that night they had a great meeting, the funds for which were guaranteed by a working men's organisation before the room was engaged (applause). The ill-advised expressions of Lord Russell that the North was fighting for empire and the South for freedom was calculated to be a source of bitterness to America. The North was fighting for the reconquest of that which had been attempted to be stolen from them by a company of traders, and the South violated the most solemn obligations because they were beaten at an election (applause). Would it be right for them to have seceded and rebelled when at a general election their present Mayor was worsted when he was put forward as the candidate of the working man? (cheers). It was not freedom to sell mankind as chattels, to treat men as pigs and dogs, and to violate with impunity the chastity of women and ruthlessly to sever the tenderest ties of affection? (applause). He was happy to find them assembled on a spot consecrated to liberty by the blood of their forefathers. That blood lifted up its voice and cried "Liberty" and should not their children in many tones re-echo back "Liberty" (applause).

Thomas Evans in seconding the resolution said he hoped that when the history of this calamity should be penned, one bright chapter would tell that on a New Year's Eve there was a great meeting in Manchester in which the voice of thousands of artisans were heard saying, "Onward, ye freemen of the North," and "Downward, ye Southern men who want slavery" (applause). Hitherto the people of the cotton districts had been drawing their livelihood in a co-operative system of slavery. He hoped they would draw out of it that night (hear, hear). The resolution was adopted unanimously with acclamation.

Edward Hoosen moved:—

> "That this meeting composed mainly of the industrial classes of Manchester, desires to record its profound sympathy with the efforts of President Lincoln and his colleagues to maintain the American Union in its integrity and also its high sense of the justice of his proclamation of emancipation, and other measures tending at once to give freedom to the slaves and restore peace to the American Nation."

He said he and others had been goaded to the calling of that meeting by the remarks made from time to time by the *Manchester Guardian*, as the working men of this district desired to set themselves right with the world. He believed Abraham Lincoln to be one of the greatest constitutional monarchs of the present age (hear, hear). They who maligned him would do well to compare him with the Monarchs of Prussia and Austria and with the ex-

King of Naples. Lincoln was a noble spectacle in the history of the world, for no monarch had ever stuck so tenaciously to the constitution of his country. Those who now found fault with the North were the same who formerly blamed the democracy of the United States for maintaining slavery. They were afraid that if America continued to rise as it had in the past and become one consolidated power over a vast continent with its affairs regulated as they had not been regulated in Europe, it would be too powerful an example for them to be able to resist manhood suffrage (hear, hear). The fact was that the power of the South was waning and in a few years the united power of the North and West would have put an end to slavery. The South saw that and therefore they seceded. Some people wished to see America divided because they thought that country was becoming too powerful. If English statesmen would cease to bully and would act uprightly, if the press of England would exhibit a little more morality we should have no need to fear a more powerful America (hear, hear).

James McMasters seconded the resolution which was carried with one or two dissentients.

Robert Golding read the following address which it was proposed to send to the President of the United States:—

"To His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln,
President of the United States of America.

"As the citizens of Manchester assembled at the Free Trade Hall, we beg to express our fraternal sentiments towards you and your country. We rejoice in your greatness as an outgrowth of England whose blood and language you share and whose orderly and legal freedom you have applied to new circumstances over a region immeasurably greater than our own. We honour your Free States as a particularly happy abode for the working millions, where industry is honoured. One thing alone has, in the past, lessened our sympathy with your country and our confidence in it, we mean the ascendency of politicians who not merely maintained negro slavery but desired to extend and root it more firmly. Since we have discerned, however, that the victory of the Free States in the war which has so sorely distressed us as well as afflicted you, will strike off the fetters of the slave, you have attracted our warm and earnest sympathy. We joyfully honour you as the President, and the Congress with you, for many decisive steps towards practically exemplifying your belief in the words of your great founders, "all men are created free and equal." You have procured the liberation of the slaves in the district around Washington and thereby made the centre of your Federation visibly free. You have enforced the laws against the slave and kept up your fleet against it even while every ship was wanted for service in your terrible war. You have nobly

decided to receive Ambassadors from the negro Republics of Hayti and Liberia, thus for ever renouncing that unworthy prejudice which refuses the rights of humanity to men and women on account of their colour. In order more effectually to stop the slave trade you have made with our Queen a treaty, which your Senate has ratified, for the right of mutual search.

"Your Congress has decreed freedom, as the law for ever, in the vast occupied and half-settled territories which are directly subject to its legislative power. It has offered pecuniary aid to all states which will enact emancipation locally, and has forbidden your generals to restore fugitive slaves who seek their protection. You have entreated slave masters to accept these moderate offers and after long and patient waiting, you, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, have appointed to-morrow, the 1st of January, 1863, the day of unconditional freedom for the slaves of the rebel states. Heartily do we congratulate you and your country on this humane and righteous course. We assume that you cannot now stop short of a complete uprooting of slavery. It would not become us to dictate any details, but there are broad principles of humanity which must guide you. If complete emancipation in some states be deferred, though only to a predetermined day, still, in the interval, human beings should not be counted as chattels. Women must have the right of chastity and of maternity, men the rights of husbands, masters the liberty of manumission. Justice demands for the black no less than for the white the protection of laws—that his voice be heard in your courts. Nor must any such abomination be tolerated as slave breeding states and a slave market if you are to earn the high reward of all your sacrifices in the approval of the universal brotherhood and of the Divine Father.

"It is for your free courts to decide whether anything but immediate and total emancipation can secure the most indispensable rights of humanity against the inveterate wickedness of local laws and local executives. We implore you for your own honour and welfare not to faint in your Providential Mission. While your enthusiasm is aflame and the tide of events runs high let the work be finished effectually. Leave no root of bitterness to spring up and work fresh misery to your children. It is a mighty task indeed to reorganise the industry not only of four millions of the enslaved races but of five millions of whites. Nevertheless, the vast progress which you have made in the short space of twenty months fills us with hope that every stain on your freedom will shortly be removed, and that the erasure of that foul blot on civilisation and Christianity—chattel slavery—during your Presidency, will cause the name of Abraham Lincoln to be honoured and

revered by posterity. We are certain that such a glorious consummation will cement Great Britain and the United States in close and enduring regards. Our interests, moreover, are identified with you. And if you have any ill-wishers here, be assured that they are chiefly those who oppose liberty at home, and that they will be powerless to stir up quarrel between us from the very day in which your country becomes, undeniably, and without exception, the home of the free. Accept our high admiration of your firmness in upholding the proclamation of freedom."

The reading of the address was frequently applauded.

Joseph Barlow moved the adoption of the address and that it should be signed by the Chairman on behalf of the meeting.

Mr. Bazley, M.P., supported the resolution and said it was not the Northern policy which immediately deprived us of supplies of cotton but an attempt at coercion on the part of the Southern States in order to compel a recognition of their independence (hear, hear). There had been no meetings in the South to assist the unemployed operatives in Lancashire but there had been enthusiastic meetings with that object in New York (hear, hear). It was the free who sympathised with the free. He referred at some length to our neglect with respect to the cultivation of cotton in the colonies and to the effort made by Mr. Bright and others to prove the capabilities of India, and said the promoters of the meeting had his best wishes for the success of this great and good cause in which they were embarked and they should have his assistance also (applause).

Mr. S. Pope also supported the resolution and charged the *Manchester Guardian* with having pro-slavery proclivities and desiring the maintenance of the institution of slavery.

The resolution was passed with cheers.

Dr. J. Watts moved:—

"That the Mayor be requested to transmit the foregoing resolution and address to His Excellency President Lincoln with the hearty salutations of this meeting and with an expression of its earnest hope that England and America may ever remain knit together in the most intimate fraternal bonds."

Richard Wilson seconded the resolution, which was adopted.

There were cries for Jackson, formerly President Davis's negro coachman, who addressed the meeting and thanked the audience for their sympathy with the negro.

A vote of thanks to the Mayor brought the meeting to a close.

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT LINCOLN TO THE WORKING MEN OF MANCHESTER.

(Reprinted from the Manchester Guardian, February 11th, 1863.)

The following letter and enclosure were received yesterday by the Mayor of Manchester (Abel Heywood, Esq.):—

Legation of the United States,
London.
9th February, 1863.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you by the hand of Mr. Moran, the Assistant Secretary of this Legation, a letter of the President of the United States addressed to you as Chairman of the meeting of Working Men held in Manchester on the 31st December and in acknowledgment of the address which I had the pleasure to forward from that meeting.

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant,
CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

Abel Heywood, Esq.,
Chairman, etc., Manchester.

Executive Mansion,
Washington.
January 19th, 1863.

To the Working Men of Manchester,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of the address and resolutions sent to me on the eve of the New Year.

When I came on the 4th day of March, 1861, through a free and constitutional election to preside in the Government of the United States the country was found at the verge of Civil War. Whatever might have been the cause or whosoever the fault, one duty, paramount to all others, was before me, namely, to maintain and preserve at once the constitution and the integrity of the Federal Republic. A conscientious purpose to perform this duty is the key to all the measures of administration which have been, and to all which will hereafter be pursued, under our frame of Government, and my official oath. I could not depart from this purpose if I would. It is not always in the power of governments to enlarge or restrict the scope of moral results which follow the policies that they may deem necessary for the public safety from time to time to adopt.

I have well understood that the duty of self-preservation rests solely with the American people. But I have at the same time been aware that favour or disfavour of foreign nations might have a material influence in enlarging or prolonging the struggle with disloyal men in which the country is engaged.

A fair examination of history has seemed to authorise a belief that the past actions and influences of the United States are generally regarded as being beneficial towards mankind. I have therefore reckoned upon the forbearance of nations. Circumstances, to some of which you allude, induced me specially to expect that if justice and good faith be practised by the United States they would encounter no hostile influence on the part of Great Britain. It is now a pleasant duty to acknowledge the demonstration you have given of your desire that a spirit of peace and amity towards this country may prevail in the councils of your Queen, who is respected and esteemed in your own country only more than she is by the kindred nation which has its home on this side of the Atlantic.

I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the working men at Manchester and in all Europe are called to endure in this crisis. It has been often and studiously represented that the attempt to overthrow this Government which was built on the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of slavery, was likely to obtain the favour of Europe. Through the action of disloyal citizens, the working men of Europe have been subjected to a severe trial for the purpose of forcing their sanction to that attempt. Under these circumstances I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is indeed an energetic and re-inspiring assurance of the inherent truth and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity and freedom. I do not doubt that the sentiments you have expressed will be sustained by your great nation and on the other hand, I have no hesitation in assuring you that they will excite admiration and esteem and the most reciprocal feelings of friendship among the American people. I hail this interchange of sentiments, therefore, as an augury that, whatever else may happen, whatever misfortune may befall your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exists between the two nations will be, as it shall be my desire to make them, perpetual.

Abraham Lincoln.

I have to express my thanks to the "Manchester Guardian" for permission to reprint; and to Mr. A. E. Dillon, of the Manchester Central Library, for his valued help. F. H.

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